



## **National History Day 2010** ***Innovation in History: Impact and Change*** **Topic Ideas from the National Archives at Chicago**

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) is the nation's record keeper. We ensure continuing access to essential evidence that documents the rights of the American citizens and the actions of Federal offices. We keep only those federal records that are determined to have continuing value. This includes textual records (such as letters, reports, and memoranda), maps, charts, architectural drawings, and photographs.

BUT

You don't have to go to Washington, D.C. to visit the National Archives. Located in Chicago, Illinois, the Great Lakes Region of the National Archives preserves records dating from 1800 to the 1990s, created by Federal courts and government agencies in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin.

AND THESE RECORDS CAN HELP WITH YOUR HISTORY DAY SUCCESS

Selecting an interesting and researchable History Day topic will help you start on the path of History Day success. Therefore the staff at the National Archives in Chicago gathered our thoughts and assembled a few topic ideas related to our holdings and this year's National History Day theme: *Innovation in History: Impact and Change*.

THOUGH "NOT THE END ALL BE ALL"

Our ideas are just a small slice of possibilities. We encourage you to explore the topics below and think about others related to your community. In some instances, we pulled a specific topic out of larger collection of records. Our complete holdings are available online at <http://www.archives.gov/great-lakes/holdings/>

TO ACCESS NATIONAL ARCHIVES AT CHICAGO MATERIALS




Some materials related to the topics we suggested are available online through ARC, our archival research catalog, at <http://www.archives.gov/research/arc/>. For other items, you would need to visit our facility at 7538 South Pulaski Road, Chicago, Illinois. Though before you pay us a visit, we recommend contacting us first at 773-948-9001 or [chicago.archives@nara.gov](mailto:chicago.archives@nara.gov) to save yourself time and ensure we have what you envision.

And as always, make sure to review and thoroughly examine the secondary literature (textbooks, books written by other historians, and journal/magazine articles) related to your topic before delving into the primary source material.



Best wishes for a successful National History Day experience!


## TOPIC IDEAS

### Science & Technology






- Preston Tucker designed and built automobiles with new features, including safety measures that are standard practice today. Records of Tucker's activities in Chicago can be found in the War Assets Administration files. 
- During World War II, the United States used airships built at the Goodyear Airdock building in Akron, Ohio. Why would airships be used instead of traditional airplanes? The Inspector of the Naval Aircraft Records within the Bureau of Aeronautics holdings document the design, technical development and construction of these airships.
- Life after death or re-invention?! Examine cases relating to the Eastland disaster and records showcasing it's Great Lake service in the 1920s and '30s as the USS Wilmette. 
- Examine changes in the land and human impact with a look at Wisconsin's Highway 12 just over the Baraboo Hills. From farmland to Badger Ordnance Works to UW-Madison married student housing to the work of the Badger Re-Use Committee of Sauk County, is this innovation in history? You be the judge.
- The Ferris Wheel at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago showcased American engineering ingenuity, but did it have a larger contribution? 
- NASA's NERVA project intended to use a nuclear engine to propel a space craft. Records of the John H. Glenn Research Center (formerly the Lewis Research Center) of Cleveland, Ohio include this project's files. Determine the benefits, costs, and implications of this innovative science.

### Government Actions

- The Farmers Home Administration provided small farmers with loans to construct or repair homes, improve farming operations, or become farm owners. Applications from Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota document these activities and the individual guidance given in farm and home management.
- The federal government created the U.S. Life Saving Service in 1871 to try and save sailors when ships were in distress. We have a variety of life saving service stations records. 
- Reversing the flow of the Chicago River improved the health of Chicago residents with cleaner drinking water. But what occurred downstate, where the diverted water flowed? 

- As part of the War on Poverty, President Johnson created the Office of Economic Opportunity to promote educational opportunities and job training among the poor. Administrative materials from a later federal governmental group, the Community Services Administration highlight local efforts in the Great Lakes region. 
- After the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese cut off approximately 90% of the United States' supply to rubber. The federal government began to look towards alternative sources for latex, including dandelions and established test plots in Wisconsin and Michigan.

### **Social Action - - - Court Records - - - etc.**

- The struggle to desegregate schools became part of the larger civil rights movement. On June 10-11, 1965 more than 100,000 African-American students stayed home, boycotting school, to protest segregated, overcrowded and inferior school facilities. Court records document the efforts of city officials to stop the boycott, as well as the organizers' motivation. 
- In the beginning of the twentieth century, numbers on clocks and watch faces were painted with radium. By the 1920s and 1930s, numbers of radium dial painters (mostly women or girls) in Ottawa, Illinois and across the country became seriously ill and died. What did the surviving painters do? And how has this impacted our work environment? Our facility has photographs documenting the painters at work, as well as other related materials. 
- Patent infringement – Who's innovation really was it? Check out Civil Case 21292, *Abigail R. Fuller vs. Marshall Field & Co.* or others to investigate this concept.
- Court cases stemming from the Iroquois Theatre Fire demonstrate the severity of the disaster. What happened after the loss of so many lives? 
- The case of *Dorothy Gautreaux vs. Patricia Harris, Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Chicago Housing Authority* tackled discriminatory practices in twentieth century housing markets. 
- Examine efforts for gender equality in the workplace with innovative, precedent-setting court cases. For example, in *Jo Carol LaFleur vs. Board of Education, Cleveland, Ohio*, mandatory maternity leave for pregnant female teachers was ruled unconstitutional. While in *Thelma Bowe, et al, vs. Colgate Palmolive Company*, hiring rules involving weight-lifting ability, when solely applied to female applicants, was found unconstitutional.
- Did an influx of immigration lead to innovation in the United States? Enrico Fermi is one example. 



= Chicago-area topic